



An Analysis of the Social Innovation Scaling Processes in Selected Asian Countries

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内容記述	この博士論文は内容の要約のみの公開（または一部非公開）になっています
year	2019
その他のタイトル	アジア4カ国におけるソーシャルイノベーション拡大プロセス分析
学位授与大学	筑波大学 (University of Tsukuba)
学位授与年度	2018
報告番号	12102甲第8913号
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/2241/00156337

Summary of the PhD Dissertation

Title of the thesis:

An Analysis of the Social Innovation Scaling Processes in Selected Asian Countries

(アジア 4 カ国におけるソーシャルイノベーション拡大プロセス分析)

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Publication information:

Aoo, K. (2019, forthcoming). *Social Innovation Scaling Process in East Asia:*

Bridging the gaps between stakeholders. Okayama: University Education Press.

Introduction

“Social Innovation (SI)” is a term that has been gaining popularity since the 1990s in both policy and academic literature in different parts of the world, including Europe, North America, and Asia. The definition of SI varies, but this study is based on the understanding that SI is i) a new product, service, or initiative to tackle social issues or create social values more effectively than existing solutions, and ii) a process that changes social relationships, which leads to macro-level change (including values, norms, behaviors, and laws and regulations) within society, as developed by European and North American SI literature.

Chapter One of the thesis first introduces an outline of the development of SI policies and research in Europe, North America, and Asia, and also explains that expectations for SI are coming partly from the growing need to tackle diverse and growing social issues with a limited amount of available resources, both in the context of developed countries (post-welfare states) and developing

countries (pre-welfare states). It then proceeds to identify the current gap in SI research between the analysis of individual cases and organizations, and the analysis of macro-level models of society, and the lack of empirical research to connect the two.

Research Question

This study intends to fill in the gaps in the existing SI literature, as stated above. The main question to be answered is: “What are the factors and causal mechanisms that affect the scaling of (or the failure of) social innovation initiatives in selected Asian countries?” While answering this main question, the study also deals with a set of accompanying questions, such as: i) What are the roles of central and local governments, businesses, and civil society within these processes? ii) What are the governance mechanisms between multi-sectoral stakeholders that lead to successful (or not so successful) scaling? iii) Are “top-down” or “bottom-up” processes more successful in the scaling of initiatives? iv) Are “indigenous” or “foreign” ideas / initiatives more successful in scaling? v) How do other factors, including political and socio-economic systems, values and norms, legislation, crises, or the use of technology influence the processes? vi) What infrastructures and policies are helpful for enhancing the social innovation processes in different countries?

Methodology

To answer these questions, this dissertation conducts an empirical analysis of case studies and their comparison to investigate the SI processes and results (both successful and failed) in different countries, then investigates the causes of the differing results, the scaling patterns and the governance mechanisms. It also compares the differences and similarities between Asian countries, and between Asian and European countries. The study conducts case analyses of the scaling processes of different SI initiatives in four Asian countries (Japan, China, South Korea, and Indonesia) to identify causal mechanisms and patterns within the processes.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the research is based on the tri-sectoral (government, business, and civil

society) relationship model within four different stages (ideation, incubation, acceleration, and institutionalization) of the SI initiative scaling process (Table 1).

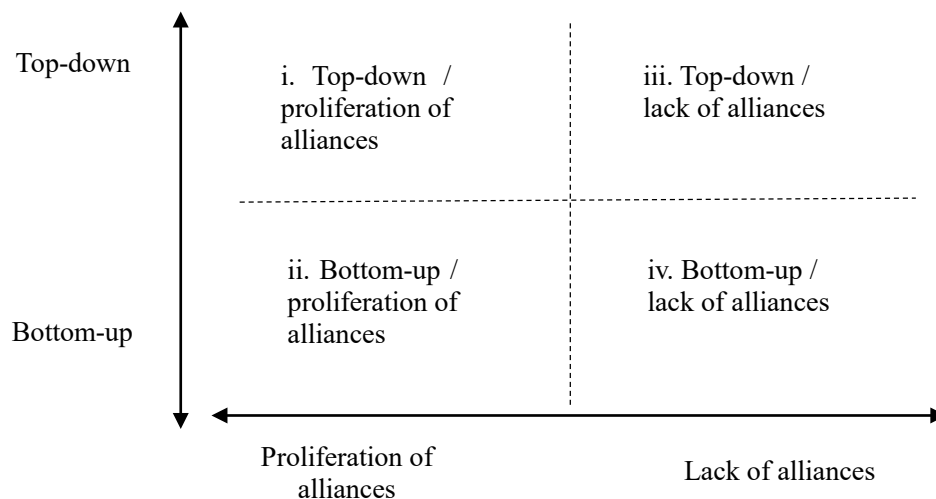
Table 1 Analytical Framework Used for Case Analysis

Actor / Stage	Stage 1: Ideation	Stage 2: Incubation	Stage 3: Acceleration	Stage 4: Institutionalization
Government	- -	- -	- -	- -
Business	- -	- -	- -	- -
Civil society	- -	- -	- -	- -

Developed by the author

It also draws a two-axes model based on first, top-down / bottom-up approaches, and second, the proliferation of local-level multi-sectoral “alliances” (Morgenthau 1968), defined in this study as a relationship between individuals and organizations in different sectors that do not necessarily share the same ideas or interests, but which still serves to push an initiative forward (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Four Domains of Top-Down / Bottom Up and the Formation of “Alliances”



Source: Developed by the author

Case Studies

Chapters Two to Five provide case studies, which follow brief descriptions of contexts in the political, socio-economic, and civil society / social movement circumstances in each countries. Chapter Two analyzes three cases from Japan: Nonprofit Organizations (NPOs), environmental pollution, and community-based integrated care. The results indicate that “alliances,” especially at local levels, are the crucial factor behind an SI initiative scaling and becoming rooted in society, and also that what moves the process forward are major crises such as the Great Hanshin Earthquake or the spread of photochemical smog, or else the creation and establishment of new ideas and concepts like “environmental rights.” Chapter Three shows how social organizations, which is the general term for nonprofit organizations in China, developed to fill the social welfare crisis after the Reform and Opening era by collaborating with local governments, utilizing information technology, and manipulating different concepts and ideals such as “public benefit.” Finally, social organizations and their supporters managed to create a new governance mechanism based on information disclosure within a Party-government system through the 2016 Charity Law. Chapter Four examines the case of social economy organizations in South Korea, and illustrates how social economy, which had the two different origins of grass-roots movements in civil society and a concept borrowed from European and North American social economy research, was agreed to as a compromise by two camps in South Korean politics during the economic crisis after the end of the 1990s, and led to government policies. However, it proceeds to describe how the Social Enterprise certification scheme led by the Ministry of Employment and Labor ended up focusing only on creating jobs, with social enterprises dependent on governmental subsidies, and furthermore how the proliferation of legal entities such as cooperatives or initiatives from local governments including the Seoul Metropolitan Government to create supportive ecosystems are creating more active and promising results. It shows that a governmental top-down approach without “alliances” is unsustainable, and also that the ideals behind an SI initiative can be distorted as the result of the power relationships between different sectors. Chapter Five explains how governmental decentralization in Indonesia started as a top-down process to avoid local

revolts and independence movements after the end of the Suharto era and the economic crisis, but ended up as the establishment of local level “alliances” between powerful elites, businesses, and outlaws called *preman* to utilize the resources provided at local levels by manipulating democratic election systems.

Findings

Chapter Six of the dissertation first presents the findings from the case analyses, including: i) the scaling of an SI initiative and systemic change happen through the establishment and proliferation of multi-stakeholder “alliances,” although said “alliances” are not necessarily a “good” thing, ii) the seriousness of the issue or the sense of crisis shared within the society, or the creation of new social values and ideas - either from on-the-ground reality or concepts brought in from other countries - help this process move forward, iii) without such local-level “alliances” and ideas, top-down policies end up in failure and without broad support, iv) social enterprises / entrepreneurs are not (yet) making enough of an impact to replace a welfare state, v) the process of SI scaling is not a straightforward, linear process, but can instead be a “back-and-forth” process, or an “up and down” between central and local levels, vi) technology and information disclosure is helping drive such changes, though still only in a limited number of cases.

The study then develops a model to illustrate four types of SI scaling (Caught on Locally, Hollow Policy, Successful Scaling, and Failed to Scale) based on two criteria, the top-down / bottom-up approach, and whether or not the proliferation of local-level “alliances” took place (Figure 2).

Figure 1 Four Types of Social Innovation Scaling

	Proliferation of local-level alliances	Lacked local-level alliances
Top-down	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">i. Caught on Locally</div> <p>Wide range of local-level alliances to support and sustain a policy / initiative coming from the central government (e.g. NPO sector in Japan / Decentralization in Indonesia)</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">iii. Hollow Policy</div> <p>Lack of local-level alliances to support the central policy / initiative (e.g. Government-led Social Enterprise scheme in South Korea / Community-based integrated care in Japan)</p>
Bottom-up	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">ii. Successful Scaling</div> <p>Diffusion of local level-alliances allows the momentum to scale up and make a change on the macro level (e.g. Environmental pollution in Japan / Social Organizations in China (partly))</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">iv. Failed to Scale</div> <p>An SI initiative that does not find stakeholders to support or expand it (none from the case studies - but numerous SI initiatives fail to scale and stay small)¹</p>

Source: Developed by the author

These findings correspond with the SI theories developed by Western authors, but the case studies also show how different context-specific values and ideas in each country affect the processes and cross-sectoral relationships.

Conclusion

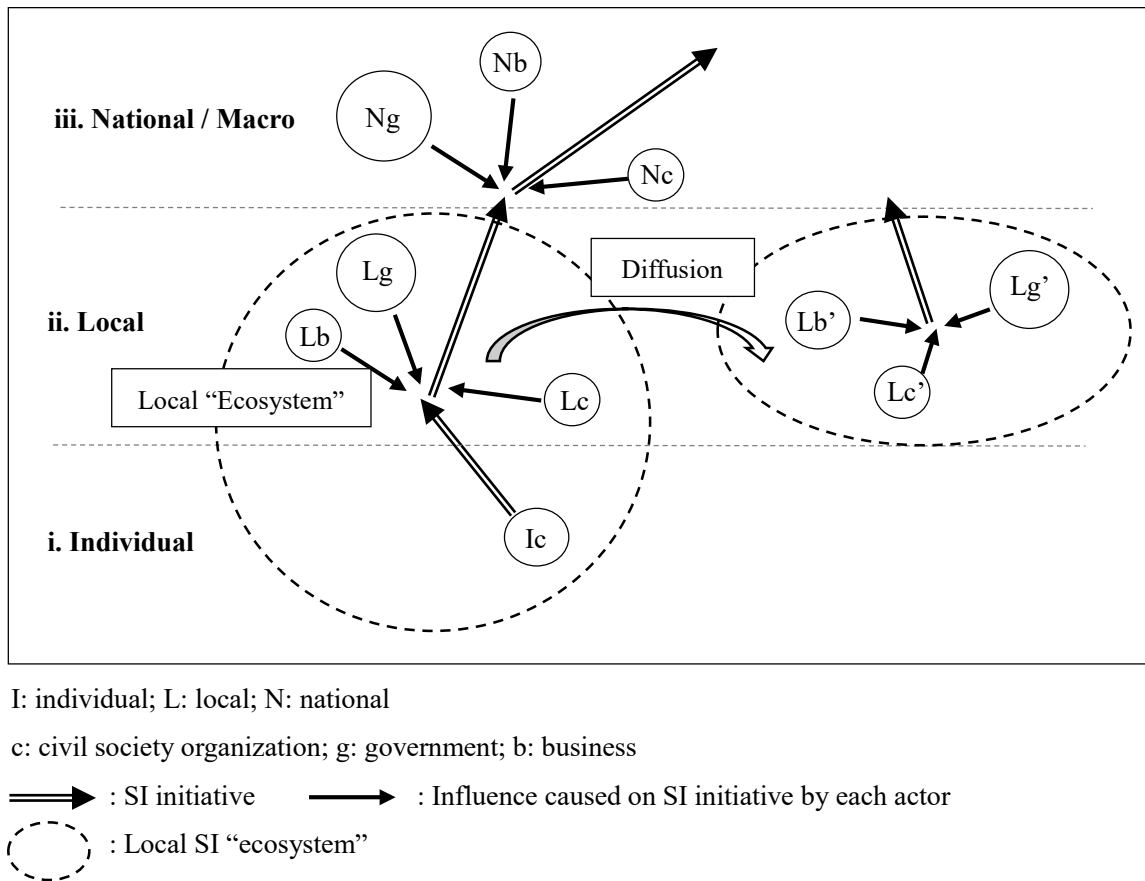
Finally, the dissertation makes a case for what the two-axes model and other findings as well as the methodology of this study may contribute to the study of SI theory and policy. The scaling model sees the primary significance of the establishment and proliferation of local-level “alliances” formed by different sectors, as they function as the driver to create macro-level social changes by an SI initiative

¹ Deiglmeier (2018); Howaldt et al. (2014)

and for them to take root. The role of such multi-sectoral “alliances” was previously overlooked as a consequence of a few established academic patterns and methodologies adopted in SI study. First, there was a dichotomy in SI research of focusing either on i) micro-level analysis of a “social innovator” or single project/organization, or on ii) macro-level concepts or models. Second, since there was a strong tendency to see SI from the perspectives of individual organizations or social movements, multi-sectoral governance or negotiation processes were mostly ignored (partly because of the unavailability of data and frameworks to analyze such processes), and scaling was considered to be the linear expansion of a homogeneous movement or an initiative without substantive change to its original principle or characteristics.

This thesis is not the first one to focus on the interaction of multi-sectoral actors (Pel and Bauler 2014; Westley et al. 2017). What is new about this study is first the application of the methodology of historical process-tracing of the interactions between various stakeholders, instead of analyzing one organization or movement. Also different from the historical process-tracing conducted by Westley and her group, it uses a tri-sectoral relationship framework as a unit of analysis instead of individuals and organizations. Second, by applying that methodology and multi-faceted perspective, this study enables us to see how an SI initiative proliferates and takes root (or does not) in the society as a result of inter-sectoral collaboration, negotiation, and conflict, as well as how the ideas and concepts - not only practices – of the SI initiative can be modified or diverted, based on the interaction of actors (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Model of Inter-Sectoral Relations in a Social Innovation Initiative



Source: Developed by the author

This research contributes to the current SI study by i) developing an analytical framework to investigate the scaling processes of SI initiatives through the dynamic shifts that take place in tri-sectoral relationships, beyond the conventional approach of looking at SI from the perspective of a organization or movement, and ii) presenting the significance of local-level, multi-sectoral governance in the process of SI scaling and in the change of ideals, values, and practices of an SI initiative as a result of the interaction. As a policy implication it argues that i) social enterprises or social entrepreneurs themselves cannot be the solution for all problems, nor serve as a replacement for the welfare state system, ii) although creating more spaces, authority and resources for local-level stakeholders may help to develop new initiatives, we must also be aware of the “elite capture” and other biases caused by power relationships within local communities, iii) there is a need to secure a minimum social safety net and service standards, as well as monitor the results created by

“innovations,” and iv) the sharing of ideas, knowledge and experiences among different countries and communities may also help forward-thinking people to develop and apply successful initiatives.

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